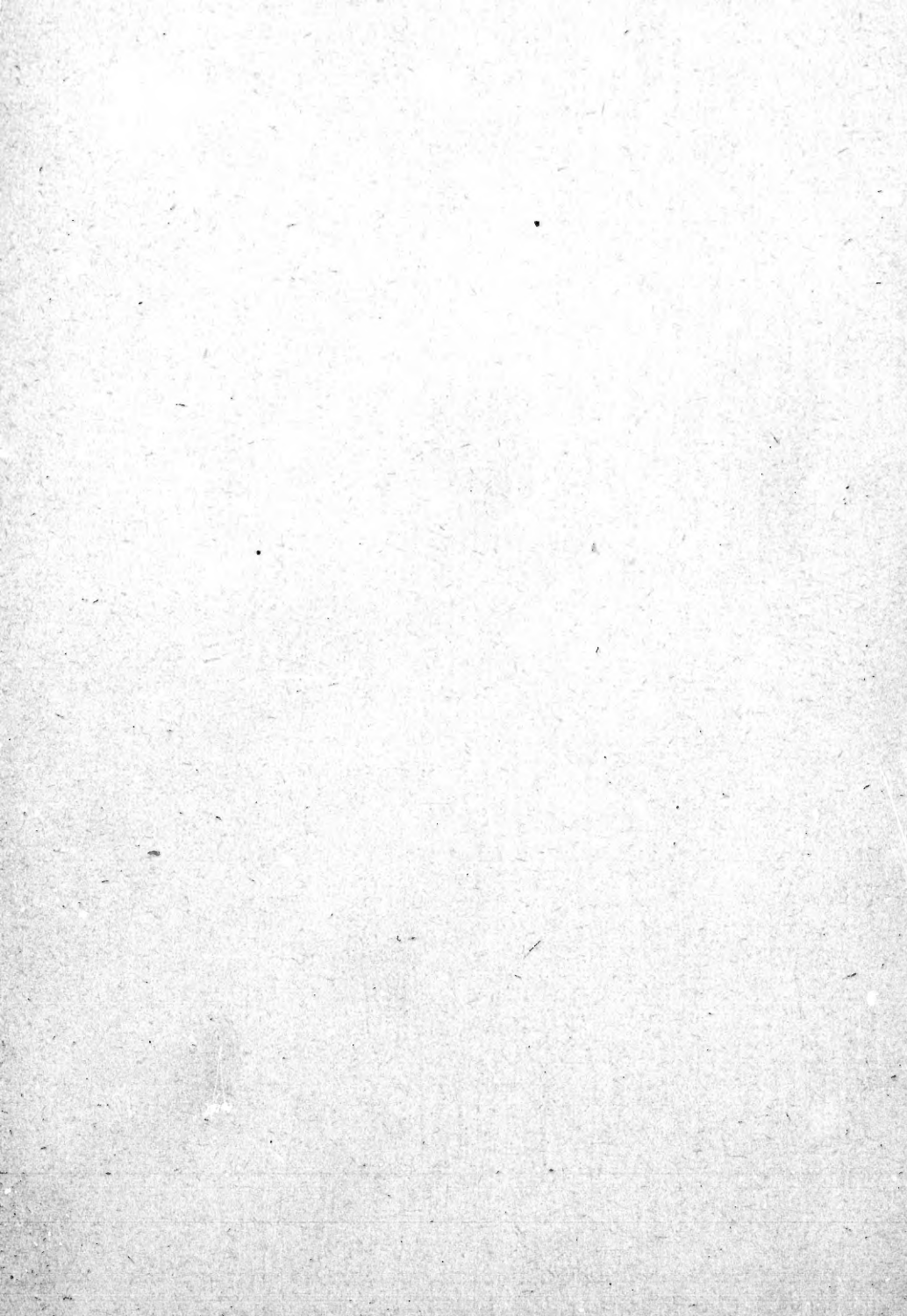




A FEW WORDS WITH SIR MACKENZIE BOWELL.

SIR,—Speaking from your place in the senate on the reply to the governor's speech you stated it was an—

Important fact, that when the resolutions were introduced admitting Manitoba into the Confederation, it was believed at that time that we were granting the same rights and privileges to the Roman Catholics of Manitoba that had been granted to the minority in Quebec and to the minority in Ontario in relation to schools.

The importance of this assertion is due to its coming from the premier of the Dominion. Speaking as the head of the government, you assure the country that the educational privileges of the minority in Quebec were extended to the minority of Manitoba, and, consequently, to deprive the minority in Manitoba of these privileges would imperil the position of the minority in Quebec. Is that the case? Is it true that the Catholics of Manitoba and the Protestants of Quebec stand alike; that there is no difference in their position, and that whatever is done to the one, may, with equal justice, be done to the other? If that be not true, you are doing a serious wrong to the Quebec minority, for you are exposing them to the danger of the majority acting on your assertion, and of retaliating upon them the wrongs they suppose and which you lead them to believe are being done to their co-religionists in Manitoba.

I challenge you to make good your assertion that the rights and privileges of the Quebec minority, were granted to the Manitoba minority—to prove that there is the slightest resemblance between the positions of these minorities. If you cannot, then you are endeavoring to bolster the claims of Archbishop Langevin at the expense of the Protestant remnant of the province of Quebec and prejudicing them injuriously in the opinion of the electorate of the Dominion.

There is only one ground upon which the interference of the State with education can be justified, and that is, for the protection of society. Were it not for that, the State would have no more right to provide schools for the youth of the country than it would to arrange for giving them food and clothing. Ignorance is so great a danger to the public weal, the peril in the working of self-governing states from an illiterate electorate so menacing, that the State steps in to make sure that every child will have opportunity to at least be furnished with the keys of knowledge—that he will be taught how to read, write, and count. Nobody pretends that is all the child ought to know, but it is all the State is justified in teaching, and all that it has any interest in having him taught, for the boy who knows how to read, will, when he becomes a man, cast a ballot more intelligently, and the boy who knows how to write will mark it more correctly, than the man who was not taught to read or write. There are other dangers that confront the working of self-governing states, but there is no other so ever-present or of such vital importance as ignorance. Give an electorate a majority of whom can neither read nor write, and self-government becomes impossible, for the voters are the ready dupes of demagogues and wield their power at the ballot box to their own hurt. To see what kind of government results from attempting to work free institutions with an ignorant body of electors, we have only to look to the republics of Central and South America, where revolution follows revolution, and, under the name of president, dictator succeeds dictator. To guard against this danger of popular ignorance, to ensure that, at least, a large majority of the

electors shall be able to use the franchise with intelligence, the State provides a system of public schools. On no other ground than this, can the maintenance of schools by the government be justified, and that they may do the work for which they were established, it is, of necessity, indispensable that the government control them.

But in Quebec the government does not control the larger part of the schools, it has abdicated its functions to the hierarchy, giving them the grant and tax for their maintenance, and leaving the bishops to do as they deem proper. It was not always thus. To tell how, point by point, politicians bartered the rights of the State for clerical support, would take too long. Enough to say, the transference is now so complete that the government is bound to introduce into the legislature no amendment to the school act until it has been submitted to and been approved of by the bishops. All this is not only a usurpation of the rights of the State, but it is an innovation. The bishops had no such control of the schools fifty years ago; they had not even at Confederation. Yet this system, which is of yesterday as it were, is the system you would fasten on Manitoba under the pretence of prescriptive right. All the schools of Quebec have not so fallen from the original purpose for which they were instituted. The schools of the non-Catholic population have remained true to the standard of the common-schools of the rest of the Dominion and are, today, the only representatives in this province of the true State school. Inch by inch the hierarchy has extended its hand over the schools of Quebec, until it has grasped all save a few, and that these few schools, true to their origin and design, are

permitted to exist, the hierarchy claims praise for its toleration! Do you know what the schools of the majority in Quebec have become? Do you not know that they are as much a part of the Church of Rome as its convents and churches, that the burden of their teaching is instruction in the observances, services, and tenets of that church, and that they do not fulfil the end for which the State founded them, for illiteracy abounds. For these schools money is drawn from the public chest and taxes authorized by the legislature are levied, yet they do not do the very work in consideration of which these grants and taxes were designed, so that the practical outcome is, the State is paying so much yearly to enable the Church of Rome to train its youth in its creed. I leave it to you, if it is not impudent that those who have devised and maintain such schools should claim it as a merit that, after contorting the State schools to serve the purpose of their church, they allow those schools that have not undergone their transmutation to exist! Is it a *privilege* to permit the non-Catholic population of Quebec to have non-sectarian schools? It strikes me to be a right, and ought to be in the eyes of the State a merit in them to have remained true to such schools. Sir, the non-Catholics of Quebec have had no rights or privileges granted them by the majority and are ignorant of any favors received from that majority, they have simply been left in the enjoyment of what is their inherent right, the non-sectarian schools designed by the old legislature of the united provinces. Because, during of late, the system of education in Quebec has changed, are the few non-sectarian schools that survive to be treated as exotics, dependent on the breath of the

majority? Are schools in accord with the principles upon which governments rest to be placed on an equality with the separate schools you insist on fastening upon Manitoba? You say the minority of Manitoba is entitled to the same rights and privileges as have been granted to the minority of Quebec. Let me enumerate to you a few of these privileges. When the non-Catholics are not numerous enough to maintain a school of their own, they are taxed to keep up a school it is impossible for them to send their children to, when a non-Catholic becomes a stockholder in a factory, he pays taxes to support Catholic schools, when the non-Catholic looks into the blue books he learns that the legislature pays yearly out of the public treasury, in the name of education, subsidies to 200 convents and a score of colleges, among the latter being the institutions of the Jesuits. To parallel these "privileges" in Manitoba would be difficult, for Protestants have no convents. Possibly if Archbishop Langevin insists on similar privileges, you might get over it by compelling his people to pay taxes to Protestant mission schools and the legislatures to give grants to P.P.A. lodges, as the nearest approximation to Jesuit seminaries. The Quebec minority resent the representation that they are specially favored. On the contrary they hold they have valid cause for complaint, and if they wished ill to the minority of Manitoba they could not desire them the treatment they submit to.

The non-Catholics of Quebec have no fear for themselves should Manitoba remain true to the stand it has taken in favor of secular schools, for to speak of the majority retaliating upon them is absurd. How could the majority retaliate other-

wise on the Quebec minority than by decreeing what is impossible—that Protestants be compelled to send their children to schools taught by nuns and friars. Supposing such a law to be enacted by the majority, it would end in benefitting the minority, for the attention of the Empire would thereby be so pointedly directed to this province, that the usurpations of the hierarchy would be upset and sectarian schools cease to exist. To speak of the minority of Quebec as existing at the sufferance of the majority is degrading to the one and offensive to the other. There are certain rights that pertain to every British subject, and so long as the minority claim naught beyond those rights, they thank no man for being allowed to enjoy them. Quebec is British, not foreign soil; it is under British law and custom; and to let it be inferred that any portion of its inhabitants enjoy those attributes that belong to British subjects because of the gracious permission of the majority, is the nonsense of obsequious creatures unworthy of a place in a British parliament. Let no member of parliament endeavor to excuse his vote on the Manitoba school question, by a pretended regard for the minority of Quebec.

The question before the Dominion is not one of schools, but whether its government is going to take cognizance of the creed of its people, and make exclusive laws for a certain number who profess a particular creed. Because a body of men say "We believe so-and-so," is parliament bound to give them exceptional treatment and enact laws different for them from those that govern the rest of the people? This has been done to a large extent in the province of Quebec; done in defiance of British law and of the interests of the minority.

Is what has been effected in the province of Quebec under exceptional conditions to be made the standard for Manitoba and the Northwest? Are the exceptional rights and privileges, not of the minority as you wrongly put it, but of the *majority* of Quebec to be grafted on our new settlements? That is the real point at issue. The Protestants of Quebec have no privileges. As regards school matters they stand on the same plane as the people of Ontario, Nova Scotia and the other provinces, with certain disabilities peculiar to themselves. To impute imaginary rights and privileges to the Protestants of Quebec as an excuse for extending favors to the Catholics of Manitoba is cowardly and dishonest. The exceptional privileges you speak of pertain to the Quebec majority, and what you are proposing to do is to force Manitoba to grant the unconstitutional and dangerous concessions obtained by the hierarchy in this province. That is the plain English of the matter, and no sophistry or garbling of words can change the fact. I could admire the boldness that would frankly say, "We are going to put in the hands of the hierarchy of the Northwest the same power as is exercised by the hierarchy of Quebec," but despise the hypocrite who, while endeavoring to do that, pretends he is only giving the same rights and privileges to the Catholics of Manitoba that have been granted to the Protestants of Quebec.

I would the people of Canada realized the significance of what its government is proposing to do. A stroke of the pen by George III. would have prevented those struggles between church and state which have made the government of Canada at all times difficult and twice in our his-

tory brought it to a standstill. The remedial order, looked upon by some as a small matter, is going to decide whether our Northwest is to be free from the strife that has afflicted the provinces by the St Lawrence or to be subject to it. Force upon the Northwest separate schools, and the point of the wedge is entered which will involve the West in the troubles and difficulties that perplex Quebec. The granting of separate schools concedes the principle that those to whom they are granted are entitled to special legislation apart from their fellow-subjects, and that dangerous principle once conceded, it logically requires that the legislature also provide for them, separate institutions for deaf mutes, for the blind, the poor, the sick, the insane, for dealing with the criminal class, all to be controlled not by the State, but by the hierarchy—the State merely providing the funds. Is the pall that stifles enterprise and progress in Quebec, to be thrown over the free soil of our Canadian West? Is there to be in that virgin country two sets of laws and two measures of dealing with its people? Are the legislatures of Manitoba and the Northwest to be ordered imperatively by the Dominion to provide exclusive privileges for a chosen caste, who will not sit at the national table and eat out of the common dish but demand separate dish and table? That is the issue before the Dominion, and there is not a Protestant in Quebec, outside the circle of politicians and place-hunters, who does not sincerely hope that the Dominion's great heritage west of the lakes may be spared the troubles and drawbacks that afflict this province.

ROBT. SELLAR.

Huntingdon, Que., May 1, 1895.

